

The potential of e-Health professions in the GCC region



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Due to the immense need to increase efficiency and improve both service quality and patient safety, digital transformation of the healthcare system has become an imperative and not an option. In the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, overall demand for healthcare is anticipated by McKinsey to increase by 240 percent over the next 20 years. However, the beating heart of any successful healthcare ecosystem is its workforce.

Healthcare is Transforming

Role requirements, competencies, and skill profiles are being redefined. Studies suggest that academic training in the areas of leadership, professional employability skills (e.g., teamwork), and business acumen (e.g., Lean Six Sigma) are not sufficient to meet the practical skills the healthcare industry demands. The changing ecosystem requires a robust and sustainable supply of highly skilled professionals, who are proficient not only in their specialty or domain but also in eHealth/health IT, to use, operate and optimise the digital services. Additionally, GCC countries are also witnessing a huge shift towards Universal Health Coverage and Value-based Care, which entails creating thousands of jobs to operate and maintain the required insurance information intensive systems. The GCC countries are facing a healthcare workforce and ecosystem sustainability challenge at the same time as the demands from its professionals are being redefined and training requires new approaches.

Career Opportunities

The digital transformation and expanding healthcare ecosystem presents an opportunity for the GCC region to ride the waves of change and leapfrog the USA and other nations, not only in terms of the access to and quality of service and care, but also by offering their next generation sustainable career opportunities. eHealth jobs cover a wide spectrum of professional roles starting from front-facing care providers such as doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other caregivers, who need "eSkills" to achieve and sustain success in their work; and newly created supporting professional roles such as clinical informaticists, health information staff, biomedical engineers and researchers. Given the shift to a skilled economy and need to map and create sustainable careers in eHealth, the Taskforce suggests the adoption of a "Career Pathway Skills Model", a model emphasising precision skills strengthening, competency-based assessment, experiential learning, life-long learning, and career progression based on continuous evaluation. The three career pathways demonstrate continual salary advancement with the development of specific skills, experience and credentials.

Utilising this approach, roles and competency-based career development:

- Ensures offerings are employer validated for today's careers and the roles of the future
- identifies opportunities for training the future workforce, as well as upskilling and training for the working learner
- Offers the opportunity to develop evidence-based training programs with stackable, latticed, and portable certifications and credentials

Achieving this model requires:

- Identification - Identify and define skills, competencies, knowledge, and abilities for specific occupational roles

- Standardisation - Develop a common language to allow for standardisation skills, competencies, knowledge, and abilities
- Calibration - Calibrate skills and competencies with occupational roles and titles through certificate development

By all stakeholders, such as education institutions, healthcare service providers, eHealth solution and service providers, and HR service providers, coming together and working with relevant government bodies, the healthcare ecosystem can be positioned to meet the demands and challenges of today and sustained through tomorrow.

Next Step: Workforce Survey

The GCC Taskforce for Workforce Development is developing a structured survey of eHealth education, skills and training for the GCC region, including detailed job descriptions for over 250 HIM/HIT/HI related jobs modified for the Gulf Cooperation Council region.

The GCC eHealth Workforce Development Conference (eHWDC 2018) taking place from 18 to 20 September, will present the findings from the Workforce Survey and the resulting whitepaper. eHWDC 2018 will provide an open discussion forum for all the involved stakeholders to converge and develop a framework for standards and professional development in eHealth, as well as workshops and training sessions for medical and IT professionals.

To learn more and get involved in the Taskforce, Workforce Survey and Conference, please visit <http://gccehealth.org>.

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